

## Police brutality in America a natural result of government thinking of citizens as "subjects"

December 10, 2014

By J. D. Heyes

(NaturalNews) In recent weeks a number of high-profile cases involving the killing of criminal suspects by police has increasingly come under scrutiny. And while the cases were "high-profile" in part because they were over-hyped by the mainstream media, as well as professional "rabble-rousers" and agitators, there should be no doubt that, over the past two decades in particular, police tactics have increasingly become more aggressive, even to the point where many communities are questioning whether "serve and protect" -- a phrase historically associated with local policing -- is a quaint concept of the past.

The two most high-profile cases -- those involving Ferguson, Missouri, police officer Darren Wilson, in which he was not indicted by a grand jury for shooting unarmed resident Michael Brown, 18; and NYPD officer Daniel Pantaleo, in which he was not indicted by a grand jury for using an illegal chokehold on suspect Eric Garner, which led to his death -- are stark in their differences, even though the outcomes were the same.

### Two cases, similar outcomes, different circumstances

In Wilson's case, the evidence presented to the grand jury -- some of which was [uncharacteristically released to the public](#) by St. Louis County Prosecutor Bob McCulloch -- showed that Wilson was clearly defending himself from Brown, who had just committed a strong-armed robbery at a local convenience store (which Wilson had reason to suspect Brown of committing when he attempted to stop him). The evidence clearly shows that Brown had assaulted Wilson in the officer's squad car, and that, contrary to now-discounted claims, Brown was not raising his hands and surrendering to Wilson when he was shot.

In the case of Pantaleo, however, the video evidence -- video taken by a young man who himself has since been charged by a grand jury on a controversial weapons charge (controversial because the person he allegedly passed a gun to, a young lady, was *not* charged with criminal firearm possession) -- [appears far more convincing](#) in its support of a medical examiner finding that Garner's death was a homicide.

And yet, again, in both of these cases, grand juries decided not to indict the officers involved.

Some have said that grand juries are notoriously lenient to [police](#) officers. They say that because

the "thin blue line" is all that stands between the civil society and chaos, grand juries tend to be deferential to law enforcement. A big reason for that is because prosecutors also lean toward *not* indicting officers.

"The system is under the complete control, under the thumb, of prosecutors," Cato Institute scholar Timothy Lynch, who co-authored a highly critical 2003 analysis, "A Grand Facade: How the Grand Jury was Captured by Government," told *CBS News*.

"If they want an indictment they are going to get an indictment," he said. "If they don't want an indictment it won't happen."

Of course, not everyone agrees with that. For his part, McCulloch told a press conference that the grand jury he presented evidence to was "extremely engaged in the process" of attempting to determine whether evidence to charge Wilson existed.

"They were extremely engaged in the process, asking questions of every witness, requesting specific witnesses, requesting specific information and asking for certain physical evidence," he said.

But another reason why indictments against cops are rare, *CBS News* noted, is because the law tends to give officers a lot of leeway in carrying out their duties.

### **Militarization of local police**

Talk show host Dave Hodges says he thinks that one of the problems is overaggressive law enforcement, due to militarization of mindset and equipment.

"One factor that needs to be considered is the 1033 program in which [the Department of Homeland Security] is militarizing our police forces and I have come to believe that this is why we are seeing such wholesale abuses of power by the police," he wrote on his website recently.

Others agree. The American Civil Liberties Union says the program mentioned by Hodges transfers war equipment like MRAPs -- mine-resistant ambush-protected armored vehicles -- as well as automatic weapons, body armor and other war equipment to local police departments, which they then incorporate into their tactics and training.

The proof is in the data: Since 1965, when LAPD officer Daryl F. Gates -- who would move on to become Los Angeles' police chief -- created the concept of SWAT (Special Weapons And Tactics) teams, they were used sparingly and only in highly volatile situations. But since then, *The New York Times* reports:

*Now, these teams execute routine warrants in "no-knock" drug raids, bursting into homes with a show of force that often far exceeds the threat to them. The number of such raids has exploded from a few thousand a year in the early 1980s to tens of thousands today.*

### **Wrong attitude?**

Many social and political observers believe that the rise of police militarization mirrors the rise of the militarization of federal agencies. They point to recent cases like those involving the Bureau of Land Management earlier this year, when the agency sent SWAT-armed "troops" to the Nevada ranch of Cliven Bundy, to essentially collect on a fine that the government said he owed.

In the case of Bundy, a high-ranking elected official -- Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev. (who has partial ownership of a corporation that [owns land neighboring Bundy's ranch](#)) -- even went so far as to label those protesting the BLM's heavy-handed tactics as "[domestic terrorists](#)."

But there have been other signs that the federal government and, perhaps by default, local police agencies (who work with the federal government through various agencies like the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI, to name just a few), are considering average Americans who are guilty of nothing more than being patriotic as enemies of the state.

In 2009, shortly after Barack Obama began his first term, then-DHS Secretary Janet Napolitano, former governor of Arizona, stood by a report that listed [returning military veterans among potential terrorists](#).

"This report appears to raise significant issues involving the privacy and civil liberties of many Americans - including war veterans," wrote Rep. Bennie Thompson, D-Mississippi, then-chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, who added that he was "dumbfounded" by the claim.

Then there is the rise of joint operations between federal and state law enforcement agencies that involve heavily armed units. *The New York Times* reported Dec. 4 on this disturbing trend, noting that in a rising number of Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) operations, "robberies aren't real, but charges are."

The paper elaborated:

*The [DEA], working with the New York Police Department and the State Police, has aggressively adopted a tactic that has been widely employed by the [government](#) in other parts of the nation.*

*The sting operations, which have drawn legal challenges across the country, have spurred concerns about the wisdom of allowing heavily armed suspects to enter dense areas of the city, expecting to carry out violent crimes -- only to be confronted by a swarm of federal agents and police officers.*

The two recent high-profile incidents involving Ferguson and NYC police officers have become clear: First, local prosecutors and grand juries are right in pointing out that police are in fact the reason why our cities and communities do not dissolve into war zones overnight; also, secondly,

there has been an over-militarization of our local police, and the result of that could be manifesting itself in more aggressive tactics that do not always bode well for civil liberties.

\